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Operation ALLIED FORCE and the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine: An Analysis

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Operation ALLIED FORCE, 1999.

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**Thesis:** Operation ALLIED FORCE did not meet the basic tenets of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine and was ultimately a tactical and strategic failure for the United States.

**Discussion:** From 24 March 1999 to 10 June 1999, the United States and NATO conducted a 78-day bombing campaign directed against Serbia and Serb forces deployed to the southern Yugoslav province of Kosovo. The Clinton administration stated before the conflict that ground forces would not be an option leaving airpower as the sole tool to achieve the goals of the US and NATO. The conflict was initially planned to be a three to four day campaign but eventually became a phased, incremented application of force. Stated goals were to end Serbian genocide of ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo and to force the withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo by coercion or destruction. Serbia eventually withdrew all forces and agreed to the presence of a NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo. But, it will be shown that the stated goals of the US and NATO were not achieved. In fact, greater instances of genocide were reported after the bombing campaign commenced and the Serb forces were largely intact and mission capable at the termination of the conflict. Analysis of the use of force within the context of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine will show that military force was not the right tool to resolve this situation in the Balkans and the now independent Kosovo is a failing, independent state and a potential breeding ground for Islamic terrorism.

**Conclusion:** The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine remains a valid tool to evaluate the potential consequences and chances for success when using military force to resolve foreign policy issues. Adherence to these principles in the future may prevent the US from alienating nations like Russia and China that may very well be partners in the long war against Islamic terrorism.

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### *Preface*

I would like to thank Dr. Paul D. Gelpi for his guidance and assistance in completing this project. I originally embarked on this project to debunk the myth that airpower, by itself, had finally fought and won a conflict without the use of ground forces. I soon discovered that this approach was short-sighted and the issues went well beyond interservice rivalries. Operation ALLIED FORCE, in my opinion, was a mistake and hurt US credibility. Although airpower was the main tool used in the conflict, many other factors contributed to the ultimate withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo.

## INTRODUCTION

*This is not to imply that a decision to initiate the use of force should ever be entered into without deep reflection...It is also likely to result, sometimes disastrously, in consequences that were not foreseen.*

–Secretary of State Madeleine Albright<sup>1</sup>

Flawed foreign policy is a cross the military is forced to bear at times. For seventy-eight days in 1999, US and NATO forces bombarded the former Republic of Yugoslavia to remove Serbian forces from the province of Kosovo in an effort to terminate the ethnic “genocide” of Muslim Albanians. Eventually, the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic, capitulated on 10 June 1999. Airpower advocates immediately insisted that his capitulation was a clear example of the decisiveness of airpower, albeit misapplied, and a vindication of the US Air Force with its decades long boast of airpower’s promise. A close analysis of Operation ALLIED FORCE (OAF), however, indicates that not only was the Clinton foreign policy misguided but also airpower was a less than coercive force. In the operational light of a post-9/11 world, only one conclusion rings true: OAF was a strategic and tactical failure. A litmus test prior to hostilities may have prevented the needless suffering of ethnic Albanians and innocent Serb civilians, as well as the damage suffered to US relations with China and Russia, if the United States had adhered to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine. This paper will evaluate OAF using the framework of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine and demonstrate that the United States’ civilian leadership misused the military as an instrument of coercive national power for an issue with no vital interest for America.

## THE WEINBERGER-POWELL DOCTRINE

*Destruction of the enemy forces is the overriding principle of war, and, so far as positive action is concerned, the principle way to achieve our object.*

–Carl von Clausewitz<sup>2</sup>



In 1983, shortly after Hezbollah bombed the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger went public with the Pentagon's post-Vietnam approach to the correct use of force and outlined the six conditions for the proper use of force.<sup>3</sup>

Weinberger's six conditions were:

- 1) The vital interests of the US or its allies must be at stake.
- 2) A commitment to victory must exist.
- 3) Political and military objectives must be clear.
- 4) Forces must be the right amount to achieve success.
- 5) Reasonable assurance of public and support from Congress must exist prior to intervening.
- 6) Force must be used as a last resort.

With these steps, military leaders sought not to provide a recipe for going to war, but a series of qualifications that they hoped would avoid political errors akin to those made during the Vietnam War. Ultimately, the Weinberger doctrine was tested during the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the success of Operation DESERT STORM proved to American military leaders that the Weinberger Doctrine on the proper use of force worked exceptionally well.<sup>4</sup>

In 1992 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled, "US Forces: Challenges Ahead." In it he described all wars as "limited" based upon the writings of Carl von Clausewitz. With a foundation of experience forged in Vietnam and the first Gulf War, he outlined "relevant questions" that should be used to evaluate the use of force. Powell's questions were:

- 1) Are the political objectives important, clearly defined and understood?
- 2) Have all nonviolent policy means failed?

- 3) Will military force achieve the objective and at what cost?
- 4) Have the military and political risks been analyzed?
- 5) How might the situation that we seek to change, once it is changed by force, develop further and what will be the overall consequences?<sup>5</sup>

Powell formulated his ideas along those presented by Weinberger and solidified his beliefs after the striking success of the Persian Gulf War. A synthesis of these ideas eventually became known as the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine and this framework will be used to analyze OAF:

- 1) Was a Vital National Security Issue Threatened?
- 2) Did the US and NATO Have a Clear and Attainable Objective?
- 3) Were the Risks and Costs Fully and Frankly Analyzed?
- 4) Were All Other Non-Violent Policy Means Fully Exhausted?
- 5) Was There a Plausible Exit Strategy to Avoid Endless Entanglement?
- 6) Were the Consequences of US and NATO Actions Fully Considered?
- 7) Was the Action Supported by the American People and Congress?
- 8) Did the US and NATO Have Genuine Broad International Support?

## **KOSOVO: HISTORY AND DECISION TO GO TO WAR**

*Two years after becoming Serb leader, Milosevic set off the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in earnest-fittingly enough-at Kosovo Polje, a scene of ancient bloodshed. The date was auspicious: June 28, 1989, the six hundredth anniversary of St. Vitus Day, when the Serb nation-and their prince, Lazar-was defeated by the Muslim Turks on the field of Blackbirds...the battle acquired a mystical significance for the Serbs.*

-Dusko Doder, *The Washington Post*<sup>6</sup>

In 1389 the Ottoman Turk army defeated the Serbs in the southern province of Kosovo, which began five centuries of Ottoman rule.<sup>7</sup> In Serbian culture, the battle is the reason for many Kosovar-Serbian problems. During the Ottoman occupation, many Orthodox Christian Kosovars and ethnic Albanians converted to Islam. By the late twentieth century, ethnic Albanians

constituted an estimated ninety percent of Kosovo's population.<sup>8</sup> A province the size of Connecticut, Kosovo remains a significant place of history, religion, and culture for Serbia (see Figure 1). Serbia liberated Kosovo from Ottoman rule in 1912.

During World War II, Jozep Broz Tito, "seized power in Belgrade and established a Communist-style dictatorship" and in July 1945 Serbia officially annexed Kosovo.<sup>9</sup> In time Kosovo was declared an autonomous region of Serbia.<sup>10</sup> Tito was skilled enough to keep tensions in the Balkans under control until his death in 1980. As a result of the nationalistic, ethnic, and religious differences, "violent factionalism tore the republics apart" after Tito's death.<sup>11</sup> Long unsettled disputes re-emerged with the break-up of Yugoslavia and war raged in Bosnia from March 1992 to November 1995. The United States was largely involved with the peace negotiations as well as military efforts to coerce Serbia to cease hostilities in Bosnia. From 29 August to 20 September 1995, NATO conducted Operation DELIBERATE FORCE whose goal was to force a Serb withdrawal from "an exclusion zone around Sarajevo" and to end Serb attacks on Muslims in "safe areas."<sup>12</sup> As a result of the bombing *and* failed ground operations, Milosevic capitulated and accepted the Dayton Accords, which ended the war in Bosnia. The US and NATO continuously referenced this experience since both concluded that, "a pattern of diplomacy backed by the coercive use of airpower already existed as the 1998-1999 crisis in Kosovo escalated."<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the experience in Bosnia was misapplied in Kosovo when negotiating peace to prevent conflict due to the fact that peace negotiations are most likely to *end* fighting that has already occurred. In Kosovo, peace negotiations started *before* significant fighting had occurred.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the Dayton Accords exacerbated the situation in Kosovo because ethnic tensions remained, which left the Serbs feeling they were "under siege" by ethnic movements outside of Serbia and the only remaining non-Serbian

element was Muslim (ethnic) Albanians.<sup>15</sup> The Dayton Accords of 1995 accelerated issues in Kosovo, therefore. They left the false impression that all parties involved had accepted a mutual agreement between ethnic Muslims of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. In reality, the overall “efforts” of the United States, NATO, and the United Nations did not resolve ethnic tensions in the Balkans.<sup>16</sup>

When Slobodan Milosevic became president in 1989 part of his appeal and power was the insistence on the reunification of Serbia with Kosovo. He chose Kosovo because of the historical and religious significance for Serbs.<sup>17</sup> In 1998, following the war in Bosnia, Milosevic deployed troops to Kosovo in response to guerrilla actions conducted by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The KLA formed in 1996 to undertake armed resistance to Serbian rule and gain independence for Kosovo. KLA attacks on Serbian police and paramilitary forces continued throughout 1998-1999 and resulted in heavy-handed Serbian reprisals. The situation boiled over on 15 January 1999 with the “Racak Incident” in which Serbian forces massacred forty-five ethnic Albanians in the Kosovo village.<sup>18</sup> This was the final event that triggered intervention by the United States and NATO. The US decided to intervene without clear objectives and without any examination of the consequences of using military force.

### **OPERATION ALLIED FORCE: CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS**

Planning for the bombing campaign began in earnest in June of 1998.<sup>19</sup> The initial planning was based on the assumption that a ground option was excessive and not required as well as too risky politically.<sup>20</sup> The air only plan mistakenly relied on the belief that with cruise missiles and various air strikes, Serbia would rapidly capitulate in a short campaign of about twelve days or less.<sup>21</sup> Several iterations of plans eventually morphed into what was designated Concept of Operations Plan (CONOPLAN) 10601. NATO leadership saw the plan as a

“gradual, incremental, and phased approach” that eventually provided the foundation for OAF, which had three distinct phases.<sup>22</sup> Phase one established air superiority over Kosovo and degraded command and control (C2) systems of Yugoslavia. Phase two then attacked military targets in Kosovo and Yugoslav forces south of forty-four degrees north latitude. Finally, phase three expanded air operations against military and security force targets throughout Yugoslavia.<sup>23</sup> The intent was to get the Serbian leadership to capitulate in Phase one by destroying command elements and follow-on phases would increase the pressure if Phase one failed. NATO’s decision to rule out the use of ground forces came to fruition for two main reasons: logistical difficulties and far more critical, the Clinton administration’s concern of minimal congressional support, along with the unwillingness of the American people and NATO allies to accept combat casualties, that would preclude a possible ground option.<sup>24</sup>

Phase one of the bombing operation commenced the night of 24-25 March 1999. The first attack wave comprised fifty-five cruise missiles launched from naval assets operating in the Adriatic Sea, as well as from B-52s outside of Yugoslavian airspace.<sup>25</sup> Airstrikes that targeted air defense sites, SAM batteries, radar, and missile communications sites followed the cruise missile strikes.<sup>26</sup> NATO aircraft bombed airfields in Serbia, Kosovo, and Montenegro along with power generating facilities, weapons factories, military and police barracks, and C2 nodes.<sup>27</sup> Contrary to the initial predictions of US and NATO leaders of a quick and decisive victory that would follow two to three days of airstrikes, the bombing failed to cause any serious “inconvenience” for the Serbs.<sup>28</sup> By day four NATO realized the bombing campaign did not have its desired results so General Clark was authorized to proceed to Phase two. Unfortunately, once the bombing commenced in Phase one, “Milosevic’s unleashing of large-scale atrocities in Kosovo and his truculent defiance of NATO denied the alliance the quick settlement it had

counted on and left both NATO and the Clinton administration with no alternative but to continue pressing the air attacks until NATO unambiguously prevailed.”<sup>29</sup>

The main difference between Phase one and Phase two was the concerted effort to target forces in the field and an increase in the overall operational tempo and targets struck. Ultimately, Phase two had little effect and the refusal to consider the use of NATO ground forces only served to undermine the campaign’s credibility.<sup>30</sup> In addition, “the Yugoslav people reacted to bombing by blaming NATO not Milosevic, for their predicament” when targets in Belgrade and greater Serbia were bombed.<sup>31</sup>

On 23 April NATO decided to attack the electrical power system and industrial infrastructure in Serbia twenty-four hours a day.<sup>32</sup> This marked the beginning of Phase three that, “escalated attacks against military leadership, command and control centers, weapons depots, fuel supplies, and other targets in and around Belgrade” that “commenced de facto on day 9 [sic].”<sup>33</sup> The increased bombing of Serb targets coincided with reports from inside Yugoslavia of “civilian protest and speculation regarding growing dissatisfaction with Milosevic’s leadership.”<sup>34</sup> In addition, NATO leaders started to consider the possibility of a ground invasion and “Belgrade saw threatening signs that suggested NATO preparations for just that contingency.”<sup>35</sup> Coupled with a counteroffensive mounted by the KLA, the NATO air campaign led Belgrade to accept a modified Rambouillet Accord. As a result, Serbia withdrew its army and agreed to a NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo.

## ANALYSIS OF THE DECISION TO CONDUCT OPERATION ALLIED FORCE

*Bombing from 15,000 feet is itself a sign of weakness in that the purpose is to limit the risk to our pilots’ lives when our national interest is not directly involved.*

—Michael Waller<sup>36</sup>

### Was a Vital National Security Issue Threatened?

The United States and NATO publicly justified intervention with two main reasons: first, to terminate continued human-rights violations against ethnic Albanians, which included the ethnic killing of KLA sympathizers; and second, NATO feared the potential destabilization of southeastern Europe due to the situation in Kosovo.<sup>37</sup> In opposition to the second reason, Henry Kissinger wrote, "neither Milosevic nor any other Balkan leader is in a position to threaten global equilibrium, as the President constantly asserts...Kosovo is a war for territory considered by the Serbs as a national shrine" and he concluded that conflict in Kosovo would not destabilize the Balkans.<sup>38</sup>

The rationale for intervention on a humanitarian basis was admirable. However, when evaluating the use of military force under the guidelines of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine, it is hard to justify that a vital national security interest was at stake if the motivation was humanitarian relief. By this rationale, the United States should have intervened during the crises in Rwanda and other places. Prior to the Clinton administration, President Bush chose to stay out of the Balkans. In 1992 Bush avoided involvement in Bosnia because it had the potential to jeopardize American credibility since Washington was unwilling neither to use ground forces nor do whatever was necessary to win. Despite the experience of the previous administration and their belief that "Bosnia was not considered a vital interest, and the political objective was not important enough to use decisive force," President Clinton chose to intervene in Kosovo.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, in their evaluation of whether Kosovo was vital to either the United States' or NATO's security situation, the Clinton administration overlooked the fact that neither a NATO member nor the United States was attacked by Serbia during the Kosovo crisis. Based upon this information and rationale, vital national security was not threatened.

## Did the US and NATO Have a Clear and Attainable Objective?

*The reason for our success is that in every instance we have carefully matched the use of military force to our political objectives.*

—Colin L. Powell<sup>40</sup>

The United States and NATO held Kosovo Peace talks in France from February to March 1999 and the Rambouillet Accords evolved from the discussions. Privately, NATO justification for intervention in Kosovo was based on three main ideas. First, NATO wanted to cease the ongoing “genocide” against ethnic Albanians that consisted of ethnic cleansing and killings of KLA sympathizers.<sup>41</sup> Second, NATO was concerned about destabilizing the Balkans and eventually Southeastern Europe that would lead to other “outside powers” stepping in and expanding the conflict.<sup>42</sup> Third, NATO wanted to avoid repeating what happened during the war in Bosnia and send a message to Milosevic that his “aggressive behavior” would not be tolerated.<sup>43</sup> The KLA eventually agreed to the terms of the Rambouillet Accords but Slobodan Milosevic rejected the agreement. After failed diplomatic attempts to convince Milosevic to sign the accords, the NATO bombing campaign commenced on 24 March 1999. However, as NATO began its bombardment of Serbia the objectives of the air campaign remained unclear.<sup>44</sup> The military, specifically, the United States Air Force, was charged with two military objectives that US leaders thought would result in the acceptance of the Rambouillet Accords. Military force, that is, airpower, was going to be applied to stop ethnic cleansing and to force the withdrawal of Serb military and paramilitary forces from Kosovo. The military goals may have been appropriate to achieve the political objectives, but the use of airpower was not capable of achieving the stated military objectives and the use of ground forces was eliminated from the onset of the campaign.



The stated goal of ending ethnic cleansing of Muslim Albanians in Kosovo was never achievable by airpower alone. In fact, the Serb army mounted no large-scale operations against Kosovo and reports of the supposed atrocities did not surface until after NATO began the air campaign.<sup>45</sup> Confessions of senior military leaders indicated a lack of support in the potential effectiveness of the campaign. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force at the time, General Michael Ryan, confessed:

“No Air Force officer ever believed airpower could stop directly the door-to-door infantry thuggery that was driving the Kosovars from their homes. Nor could airpower directly stop the slaughter and war crimes.”<sup>46</sup>

The other stated goal of coercing Serb military and paramilitary forces to withdraw from Kosovo proved to be another failure. Bad weather, rough terrain, and exaggerated bomb damage assessment reports all contributed to over estimation of airpower effectiveness. NATO and the Department of Defense both conducted post-conflict assessments of strikes against fielded Serb forces. Data is conflicting at best and one critique of a Pentagon report stated:

The Secretary of Defense suppressed an Air Force report that showed that the number of targets verifiably destroyed was only a tiny fraction of the U.S. claims: 14 tanks, not 120; 18 armored personnel carriers, not 220; 20 artillery pieces, not 450. The article states Air Force investigators...only found evidence of just 58 successful strikes out of the 744 confirmed strikes by NATO pilots during the war.<sup>47</sup>

Results will never be certain, but during the withdrawal of forces, Yugoslav units were visibly combat effective with good morale and large quantities of undamaged equipment.<sup>48</sup> Despite the fact Milosevic eventually capitulated, military force was not determined to be the sole factor in the cause for withdrawal of Serb forces.

### **Were the Risks and Costs Fully and Frankly Analyzed?**

*We should always be skeptical when so-called experts suggest that all a particular crisis calls for is a little surgical bombing or a limited attack.*

—Colin L. Powell<sup>49</sup>

By eliminating the option of a ground campaign, NATO and the United States clearly analyzed the risks and costs and determined the true worth of using military force in Kosovo. A previous NATO analysis of ground forces required to defeat the Serbian army in 1998 was nearly two corps of land troops. This convinced most NATO members that the cost was excessive in regards to money and possible casualties.<sup>50</sup> Airpower was almost risk free, believed to be virtually cost free, and thereby extremely attractive to leaders of NATO countries and was an idea championed by the Clinton administration. Upon closer examination, the assumptions made by NATO were extremely optimistic and the efficacy of airpower alone was overestimated. The Air Force and airpower proponents failed to educate political leadership and the public of airpower's potential for success and failed to highlight potential limitations of airpower.<sup>51</sup> Air Force leadership also failed to communicate to senior military and civilian leaders the potential time required to coerce Milosevic through airpower alone, as well as the shortcomings of a strategy based upon gradual escalation.<sup>52</sup>

The only conclusion that can be reached is that NATO and the United States failed to evaluate the risk and cost of a limited military campaign in Kosovo. As a result, America justified its attack on Yugoslavia to stop a campaign of ethnic cleansing, but NATO conducted air operations largely irrelevant to that purpose and "within NATO and the United States, many wondered whether or not the gradualist approach and the preclusion of ground troops had merely emboldened Milosevic's forces."<sup>53</sup>

### **Were All Other Non-Violent Policy Means Fully Exhausted?**

*In short, Rambouillet was just Albright's charade to get to a bombing campaign.*

—Ted Galen Carpenter<sup>54</sup>

The Clinton administration was convinced, as a result of the war in Bosnia, that the only method of dealing with Milosevic was a bit of diplomacy backed up with the threat of airstrikes.<sup>55</sup> As a result, the US was predisposed to use military force in the form of airpower when dealing with issues in the Balkans. This tendency undermined any serious attempt at diplomacy since the default position was to use coercive force in the form of aerial bombardment. As stated earlier, planning began in earnest for military operations in April of 1998, almost one year prior to the Rambouillet peace conference held from February to March of 1999.

Rambouillet is cited frequently as the main reason diplomacy failed in Kosovo. The overall intent of the Rambouillet peace process was to force Milosevic to accept US and NATO demands. Many contend that Milosevic could never agree to the conditions set forth in the accords and he was left with no choice but to refuse and prepare for NATO bombing. This proposed agreement provided:

“(1) the withdrawal of most Yugoslav military and paramilitary forces from Kosovo; (2) the restoration of Kosovo’s political autonomy; (3) a three-year transition period, at the end of which there would be a referendum on Kosovo’s future; (4) disarmament of the KLA; and (5) deployment of an armed NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo.”<sup>56</sup>

The United States, led by Secretary of State Albright, failed to play the role of an “impartial mediator” during the conference by taking the side of the Kosovo Liberation Army.<sup>57</sup> It did not help that Madeleine Albright believed a strategy of negotiations with Milosevic to reach a political solution was going to end in failure.<sup>58</sup> At the end of negotiations, the Clinton administration was “flabbergasted” when the KLA initially refused to accept the terms of the Rambouillet Accords since they provided no terms for complete independence for Kosovo.<sup>59</sup> The US was forced into “cajoling” the KLA to accept the terms of Rambouillet by using the

threat of NATO bombardment of Serbia as a “carrot” and the KLA finally accepted.<sup>60</sup> Serbia refused to sign the accords for two reasons. First, Milosevic accurately believed that the terms favored the KLA and Serbia’s control over Kosovo was going to be marginalized close to zero.<sup>61</sup> The terms of Rambouillet did not solve the independence issue of Kosovo and Milosevic knew this was eventually going to be an issue for Serbia. The second reason for Serbia’s refusal was the fact that the Rambouillet terms allowed for NATO peacekeepers in Kosovo as well as any other part of Yugoslavia, to include Belgrade, Serbia. Milosevic believed this demand was unrealistic and an infringement on Serb sovereignty and predictably refused to sign the accords.<sup>62</sup>

This approach at Rambouillet was one-sided and did not exhaust all options with regard to peace. No attempt was made to pacify the demands for independence of ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo. The struggle for Kosovar independence was originally a peaceful endeavor. Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova led the ethnic Albanian movement to gain independence from Serbia rather than autonomy. Rugova was a pacifist and the early 1990’s were characterized by largely peaceful attempts to gain complete independence.<sup>63</sup> However, initial elements of the KLA movement began in 1996 and by 1998 became a powerful political and military factor, with the stated goal of achieving independence for Kosovo by conducting a counterinsurgency campaign against Serb military, paramilitary, and police forces in Kosovo.<sup>64</sup> Violence finally broke out in 1997 due to the KLA’s attempt to turn a “political confrontation into a military confrontation” and not due to a systematic Serb plan of ethnic violence.<sup>65</sup> The KLA’s basic strategy was to provoke the Serbs so that they responded with harsh reprisals in an effort to lure the US and NATO into the conflict.<sup>66</sup> No attempts were made to pacify or disarm the KLA and the counterinsurgency campaign conducted by the KLA was a catalyst for violence. The KLA vowed never to disarm unless the goal of complete independence was achieved; the KLA

believed the only way to realistically achieve this goal was via violent methods. In the end, unfortunately, the Clinton administration only blamed Milosevic for all the problems associated with Kosovo and the KLA reaped all the benefits. President Clinton summed it up with the statement, “we decided to try diplomacy...but I wasn’t optimistic.”<sup>67</sup>

### **Was There a Plausible Exit Strategy to Avoid Endless Entanglement?**

*Having struggled for the past few years to get out of a NATO-led peacekeeping operation in Bosnia, the commanders were reluctant to get involved in yet another conflict in the Balkans.*  
 –Dag Henriksen<sup>68</sup>

From the beginning, no plausible exit strategy existed for Kosovo. The Rambouillet terms never answered the question of Kosovar independence. All the accords guaranteed was a referendum on Kosovo’s future after three years and this provision was removed when Milosevic finally accepted modified Rambouillet terms in June of 1999. The only achievement of OAF and the Rambouillet Accords was a marginalized Slobodan Milosevic that resulted in his removal in 2000. Former Ambassador Richard Holbrook noted in December 2007 that, “exactly 12 [sic] years after the Dayton peace agreement ended the war in Bosnia, Serb politicians, egged on by Moscow and Belgrade, are threatening that if Kosovo declares its independence from Serbia, then the Serb portion of Bosnia will declare *its* independence.”<sup>69</sup> A political struggle entering its second decade is an obvious endless struggle for the United States. Unfortunately, roughly 16,000 U.N. troops remain in Kosovo to maintain peace until the ultimate status of Kosovo is determined.

One can argue that no exit strategy existed for Kosovo nor was one created from the very start of the conflict. Congress was informed that the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia was to last only a year and felt “deceived” when this did not come to fruition.<sup>70</sup> The one notable difference between the terminations of the war in Bosnia and the war in Kosovo was that the

Dayton Peace Accords provided a political solution to the problem in Bosnia whereas the Rambouillet Accords did not provide a political solution to Kosovo; the accords complicated the question of how to terminate the conflict and how to provide an exit strategy. After the Bosnia experience, US policy makers tended to stray from this basic tenet of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine largely due to the fact that the military was used for humanitarian crises. Due to the nature of these operations, the resulting conventional wisdom was that it was better to act first and determine political and military policies and plans later.<sup>71</sup> The lingering question of how long troops will remain in the Balkans and under what circumstances they will be withdrawn only supports the basic Weinberger-Powell Doctrine requirement for a plausible exit strategy prior to the application of force is necessary to avoid endless entanglements.

#### **Were the Consequences of US and NATO Actions Fully Considered?**

*Moreover, one should not doubt that a lot more civilians-both Serbs and Albanians-were killed by NATO than Western officials were willing to admit.*

-Ted Galen Carpenter<sup>72</sup>

The war in Kosovo resulted in many negative consequences for NATO and the US. The air campaign achieved the opposite of what political leaders were attempting to achieve; relations with Russia and China were damaged, the bombing created a larger refugee crisis, collateral damage impacted innocent Serb civilians, and the reputation of the US and NATO was sacrificed by supporting the KLA, who was on the US State Department's list of terrorist organizations prior to commencing the NATO led bombardment of Serbia. The only conclusion that can be reached is that the consequences of using military force in Kosovo were not adequately analyzed or predicted.

The US claimed that the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was an accident. Regardless of intent, the political damage done by the bombing was not equal to the tactical

gains if it was indeed a legitimate target. The bombing angered the Chinese government and created anti-American sentiment among various members of the Chinese population. In addition, the tenth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 were overshadowed by the events in Kosovo and the US lost considerable credibility in the advancement of human rights.<sup>73</sup> Also, OAF harmed relations with Russia. At the time unified Germany was allowed to join NATO, the US promised Russia that no other Eastern European nations would be allowed to join NATO. In reality, membership was subsequently offered to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.<sup>74</sup> President Clinton informed Russia that the alliance was purely defensive in nature and Russia "would be a full participant in European security affairs."<sup>75</sup> In reality, OAF was offensive in nature and ultimately, Russia was only allowed to provide a small presence of peacekeepers along with American, French, and German troops.<sup>76</sup>

Prior to the start of OAF, it is estimated 2,500 people died during the insurgency in Kosovo. When the bombing campaign was terminated, an estimated 10,000 people died in an effort that was to stop violence, not accelerate it.<sup>77</sup> In addition, an estimated 230,000 refugees fled Kosovo at the start of OAF and by the end of the operation, 1.4 million people fled Kosovo.<sup>78</sup> The extent of the refugee problem was never anticipated and may have been a greater destabilization factor in the Balkans rather than the Kosovo issue itself. Serbian civilians were greatly impacted due to NATO airstrikes on electrical grids and water facilities. These attacks caused unnecessary hardship on a population largely unsupportive of Slobodan Milosevic and innocent of any crimes against ethnic Albanians.<sup>79</sup>

In a post 9/11 world, any connection to terrorism cannot be overlooked, regardless of the issue. However, in 1999, the Clinton administration turned a blind-eye to the fact the KLA was listed as a terrorist organization by the US State Department with known connections to Osama

bin Laden. The US government knew of links to Islamist organizations that routed money to the KLA.<sup>80</sup> The Clinton administration ignored this even though the United States bombed terrorist training camps in Afghanistan as retribution for the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.<sup>81</sup> Bin Laden was suspected of financing the KLA with money to purchase weapons and he persuaded individuals to go to Kosovo to fight in the emerging struggle. These Muslim extremists were suspected to be from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia, and Sudan.<sup>82</sup> The fear in Washington was that the conflict in Kosovo would become a breeding ground for Muslim fundamentalism.<sup>83</sup> The consequences of dealing with a terrorist organization was either ignored or overlooked by the Clinton administration. The extent of the damage and spread of militant Islam in the Balkans can only be estimated. However, it was reported in 2007 that Serbian security forces found a base in Southern Serbia near the border of Kosovo believed to be a training base for radical Islamists.<sup>84</sup>

### **Was the Action Supported by the American People and Congress?**

*Congress was wary of military involvement in the Balkans. Without clear objectives vital to American interests and a defined exit strategy, Congress was not inclined to put US troops in harm's way in faraway countries.*

—Dag Henriksen<sup>85</sup>

Congress did not support military action in Kosovo or the Balkans as a whole. This is the main reason airpower was the single method of force used to resolve the Kosovo crisis. As a result of the failed mission in Somalia in 1993, the Congress did not want to use military force in Bosnia and preferred to lift an arms embargo to aid the Muslim Bosnians.<sup>86</sup> Bosnia was fresh in the mind of the Congress and as conflict approached in Kosovo, Congress was opposed to the use ground troops.<sup>87</sup> In fact, General Wesley Clark noted, "Secretary Cohen was attempting to discourage me from discussing any possible need for ground troops, even privately."<sup>88</sup> National Security Advisor Sandy Berger made several public statements and revealed that the president



was never going to use ground troops in Kosovo. The reason was due to his belief that Congress would never approve funding for any ground operations.<sup>89</sup> Questions also arose regarding the legality of conducting airstrikes in Yugoslavia. President Clinton ignored these concerns and acted without the approval of Congress to attack another sovereign nation. Additionally, the House of Representatives failed to pass a resolution that supported the airstrikes.<sup>90</sup>

Support and interest in the conflict in Kosovo by the American people was considered apathetic at best and OAF was merely an unimportant distraction.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps this was a result of no American deaths in ground combat or possibly this was due to the fact most Americans did not believe there was a significant national interest that the US fought to achieve.

### **Did the US and NATO Have Genuine Broad International Support?**

*An undeclared war against Yugoslavia set a bad precedent for NATO, because it is contrary to the purposes and the historical traditions of the alliance. It violates both the spirit and the letter of the North Atlantic Treaty that solemnly commits its signatories to respect the Charter of the United Nations and to use force only if one of the member states is attacked.*

—Michael Waller<sup>92</sup>

NATO supported intervention in what was regarded as a humanitarian crisis. However, no United Nation mandate was obtained to authorize the bombing. Russia and China opposed the action and were sure to veto any vote regarding the use of force in Kosovo by NATO. Despite this, NATO credibility was on the line and the bombing proceeded as planned. Widespread opposition was expected in Greece, Italy, and Germany.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, public opinion polls in Russia showed anti-American sentiment increased from twenty-three to forty-nine percent and pro-US ratings decreased from sixty-nine to thirty-nine percent.<sup>94</sup> Overall, OAF lacked international credibility and support beyond members of NATO. This was an obvious departure from the universal support given to Operation DESERT STORM, but the Clinton administration and NATO acted anyway.

## WHY DID MILOSEVIC CAPITULATE?

*You're a great country, a powerful country. You can do anything you want. We can't stop you."...I said, "Yes, you understand. You're absolutely clear what will happen when we leave?" And he said, very quietly, "Yes. You'll bomb us."*

—Slobodan Milosevic<sup>95</sup>

Despite the fact that OAF violated most principles of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine, it appeared a success. Two main factors are attributed to the final capitulation of Milosevic. The threat of a NATO ground invasion and the diplomatic intervention by Russia are the most likely factors that forced Milosevic to capitulate. Tony Blair supported a ground invasion and broached the topic with President Clinton. Clinton reaffirmed that ground forces were not an option. Despite this, NATO began preliminary planning for a possible invasion. Planning was not complete by the end of the bombing campaign, but it is believed that the threat of a ground invasion influenced Milosevic's decision to terminate the conflict.<sup>96</sup> At this time, Russia struggled with economic issues and desired enhanced relations with the US and Europe.<sup>97</sup> A ground invasion presented several problems for Russia. An invasion was likely to make Russia look "impotent" and likely to lose Western support if opposition to the ground action was raised or risk "outrage" from the Russian populace if it supported NATO's actions.<sup>98</sup> Former Russian Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin met with Milosevic and NATO leaders and helped broker modifications to the Rambouillet Accords. Chernomyrdin met with Milosevic in early June and managed to convince him to accept the modified terms.<sup>99</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Focusing the vast strength of American foreign policy on a tiny former Ottoman possession of no strategic importance or economic value, with which the United States had no ties of history, geography, or sentiment, is something that not even the most powerful and visionary of her predecessors...could ever have imagined, let alone achieved. But as American bombs fell on Yugoslavia, Madeleine Albright had done both.*

—Michael Mandelbaum<sup>100</sup>

The United States failed to apply the tenets of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine in the Balkans during OAF. Despite this, the US and NATO bombed Yugoslavia and Slobodan Milosevic eventually accepted modified terms of the Rambouillet Accords. The requirement to allow NATO to place peacekeepers anywhere in Yugoslavia was removed and became a Kosovo-only peacekeeping force. Additionally, any requirement to hold a future referendum regarding the autonomy or independence of Kosovo was removed. These are the same issues Milosevic was in disagreement with prior to OAF. Perhaps modified terms from the start would have led to a peaceful outcome. In the end, this military action sacrificed US credibility with Russia and China and may have inadvertently created a breeding ground for militant Islam in Eastern Europe. With 16,000 peacekeepers still in Kosovo almost a decade after military action, an exit strategy has evaded NATO. Further support of an independent Kosovo will only antagonize Serbia and jeopardize relations with a more relevant Russia for the United States. Serbian President Boris Tadic recently stated in a conversation with Russian president Vladimir Putin, "Serbia very deeply respects the position of Russia on Kosovo."<sup>101</sup> Putin responded, "Russia is categorically against a unilateral declaration of independence for Kosovo," and it could "seriously damage the system of international law and have negative consequences for the Balkans and affect stability in other regions." Russian warnings may not be so easily ignored as they were in 1999. The US may have sent the wrong message to other places similar to Kosovo that are struggling to gain an ethnic-based independence from the Kurds in Northern Iraq to Chechnya in Russia. Most of these countries, upon gaining independence, will immediately become failing states mainly due to a lack of economic viability. Kosovo will only be capable of functioning with economic support from the European Union, the United Nations, and the United

States. The conditions will be prime for the growth of crime and radical Islamicization; all issues the US may be forced to confront in the future.

The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine remains a valid tool to evaluate the use and the consequences of military force. If a serious attempt was made to evaluate the situation in Kosovo according to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine, the US may have avoided current problems in the Balkans and confrontation with Russia today. There are exceptions when all tenets of the Doctrine do not have to be met. The bombing of Libya in 1986 in response to a series of terrorist attacks did not meet every tenet of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine, but the decision to use force did meet most; the success of Operation EL DORADO CANYON is undeniable. The long war against terrorism will require an effective and methodical approach when evaluating the decision to use military force and the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine remains just as valid today as it did during the first Gulf War in 1991.

## NOTES

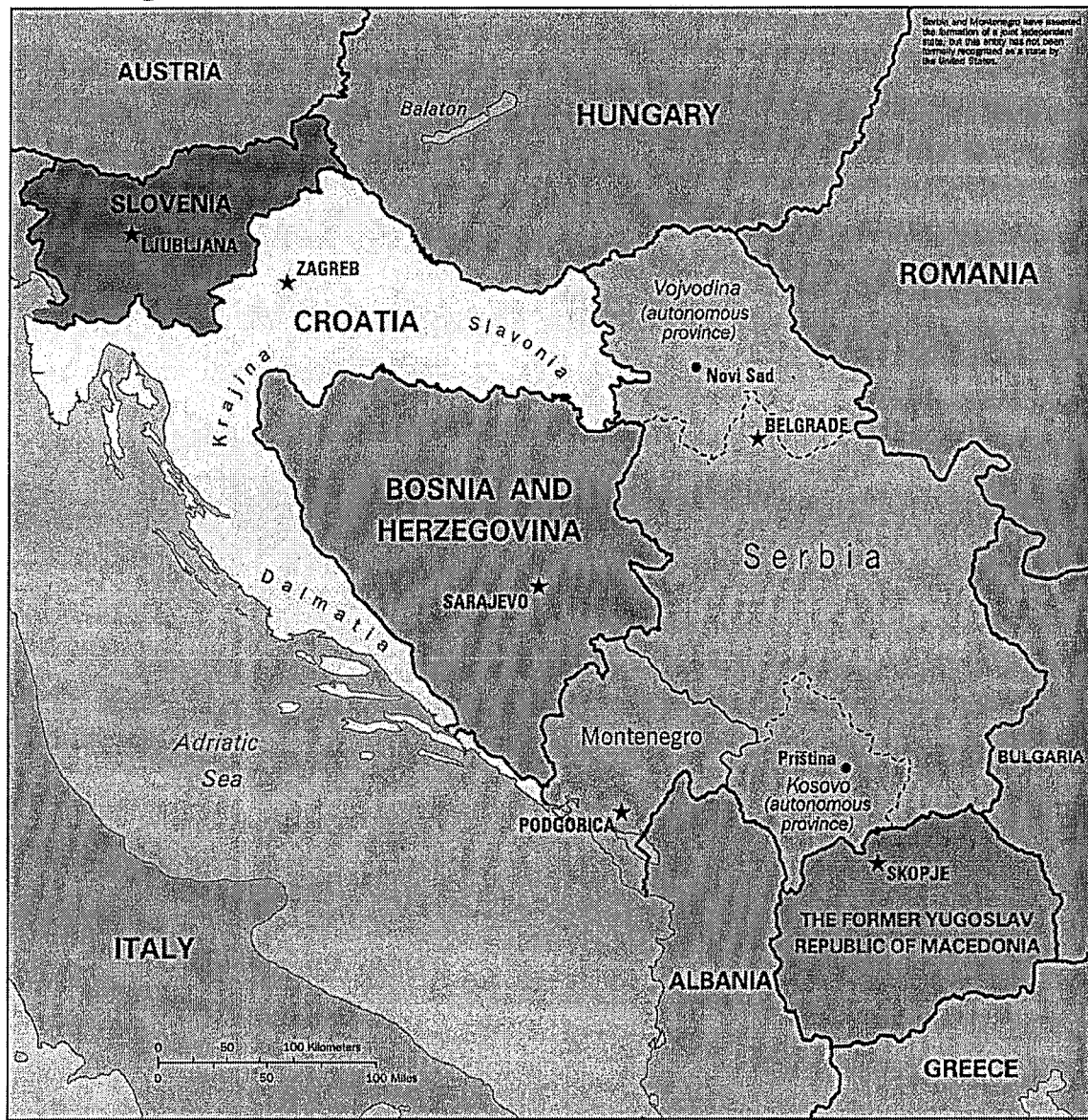
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- <sup>2</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1976) 258.
- <sup>3</sup> Kenneth J. Campbell "Once Burned, Twice Cautious: Explaining the Weinberger- Powell Doctrine." *Armed Forces & Society* 24, no. 3 (1998): 364-365.
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- <sup>10</sup> Tim Judah, *Kosovo, War and Revenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 31.
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- <sup>12</sup> Bruce R. Nardulli, Walter L. Perry, Bruce Pirnie, John Gordon IV, and John G. McGinn, *Disjointed War* (Santa Monica, CA:RAND, 2001) 12.
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- <sup>21</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Lessons and Non-Lessons of the Air and Missile Campaign in Kosovo*, 21.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen, *War Over Kosovo* (New York:Columbia University Press, 2001) 4.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 12.
- <sup>25</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Lessons and Non-Lessons of the Air and Missile Campaign in Kosovo*, 20.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 21.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 24-25.
- <sup>30</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen, *War Over Kosovo*, 11.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 10.
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- <sup>33</sup> Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 29.
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- <sup>54</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, *NATO's Empty Victory* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2000) 24.
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- <sup>58</sup> Ivo Daalder and Michael O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly, NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2000) 69.
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FIGURE 1

## Former Yugoslavia



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#### FIGURE 1.

Former Yugoslavia Map, University of Texas at Austin, [utexas.edu](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/fm_yugoslavia_pol96.jpg).  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/fm\\_yugoslavia\\_pol96.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/fm_yugoslavia_pol96.jpg) (accessed 26 Jan 2008).